



**Private William Washer Bartlett (Regimental Number 270) lies in St-Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen: Grave reference O. VII. J. 9.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *student*, being...*at school*...with no declared income, William Washer Bartlett presented himself for medical examination in his home community of Brigus on September 2, 1914. It was a procedure which pronounced him...*fit for Overseas Service*.**

**(continued)**

At some time during the next two days, William Washer Bartlett made the short journey to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, where he was now to enlist at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 4. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

Following an almost four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing – Private Bartlett was to attest on October 1 and then, two days following, was to embark on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.

The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

(Right above: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

In the United Kingdom Private Bartlett trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

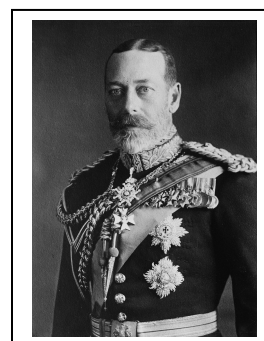
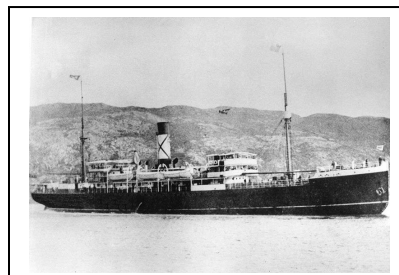
(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011)*

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then ordered south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F\*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia)*

(continued)





**\*On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.**

**It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Bartlett of 'B' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist for the duration of the war\*.**

**\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.**



**(Right above: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)**

**(Right: The image of Megantic, in peace-time a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)**



**On August 20, 1915, Private Bartlett and his comrades-in-arms embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment dis-embarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.**



**(Right above: *Kangaroo Beach*, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of *Suvla Bay*. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)**



**(Right above: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at *Mudros*: either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – *Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)**

**By the time of the Battalion's landing at *Suvla Bay*, however, Private Bartlett was no longer to be serving with his unit.**

\* \* \* \* \*

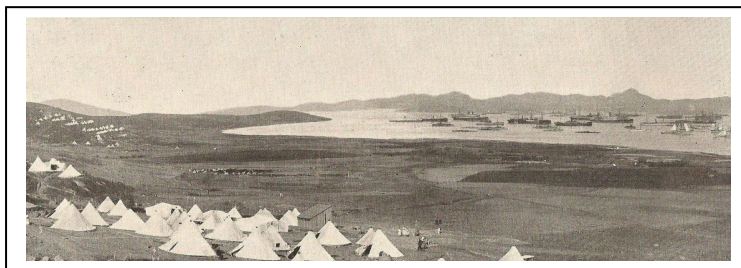
(Right below: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)

On that September 19, Private Bartlett was not to continue on with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion to Suvla Bay, but would remain at *Mudros Bay* on the Greek island of Lemnos at a distance of some fifty kilometres from the *Gallipoli Peninsula* and where the unit had changed ships to be transported to the beaches.



He was there to be admitted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital in the vicinity of the minuscule community of Mudros for medical attention to a venereal problem.

Discharged *to duty* on October 20, Private Bartlett was reported soon afterwards as having been transferred back to hospital, on this second occasion to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Stationary Hospital on October 25.



Released once again *to duty* on December 2, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of that month he entered the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Stationary Hospital, for yet again further treatment.

It was not until December 30 that he was once more considered fit for discharge *to duty*, on this occasion being sent to the *Lowland Camp Convalescent Depot*, also at Mudros.

(Right above: *By the end of the year 1915, the bay and the inadequate harbour at Mudros Bay were almost entirely surrounded by French and British – including Canadian and Australian - medical facilities, the majority of them under canvas. – image from Illustration*)

*\*No Canadian troops were to serve in the Gallipoli Campaign, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stationary Hospital being perhaps the only Canadian presence in the eastern Mediterranean during this period. The hospital's matron and a nursing sister lie in Portianos Cemetery, victims of dysentery.*



(Right: *That part of Portianos Military Cemetery in which are to be found the graves of Nursing Sister M.F.E. Munro and Matron J.B. Jaggard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Stationary Hospital. – photograph from 2011*)

On February 4 of 1916, Private Bartlett began the sea-voyage to return to the United Kingdom on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Gascon*. The passage apparently lasted for some two weeks – perhaps stopping in at either Malta and/ or Gibraltar en route – before his eventual arrival back in England.



(continued)



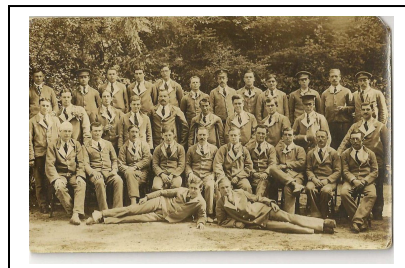
(Preceding page: *The image of HM Hospital Ship 'Gascon' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel also later served during the East African Campaign.*)

It would seem that by this time that he was also suffering from pneumonia as it on the basis of this diagnosis that, on February 18, Private Bartlett was admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the southern Borough of Wandsworth. However, his stay there would be one of short duration, of only five days, as his documents show that he was released from care on February 23.



(Right above: *The main building of what was to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *A group of Newfoundland patients, the majority unfortunately unidentified – although the fourth from the left in the second row is a 'Fred' – in the company of nursing staff, while convalescing at Wandsworth – from a post-card courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



Having been granted the customary ten-day furlough – apparently spent by him in Edinburgh - accorded to military personnel upon discharge from hospital, Private Bartlett made application for (see further below) – and, it would seem, received - an additional two weeks leave before having then been required to report *to duty* at the Regimental Depot. He reported there on March 28.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 – that the newcomers from home were to be despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

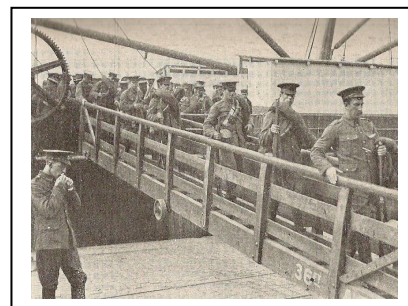


(Right above: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the 'other ranks' were quartered, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

On October 24, 1916, the small 13<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr - Private Bartlett one of the ten *other ranks* and the single officer which comprised it - embarked through the English south-coast port of Southampton for the short sea-voyage to the British Expeditionary Force Base Depot at Rouen, the capital city of Normandy.

There he spent some days in final training and organization\* before leaving the Depot to re-join his 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *in the field*.

(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen for the Western Front. – from The War Illustrated*)



*\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training was ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

Private Bartlett reported to duty with his parent unit on November 7 as one of the reinforcement draft of twenty-four *other ranks* and eight officers from Rouen to do so on that date. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at that time had been billeted in or near the community of Ville-sous-Corbie since the last day of the previous month and would not move back to the forward area until the 16<sup>th</sup> of that same month.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime, during the first three months of Private Bartlett's absence from his unit due to those medical problems, the operation at *Suvla Bay*, and indeed the entire *Gallipoli Campaign* itself had proved to be much of a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods of November 26 – and the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command\* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

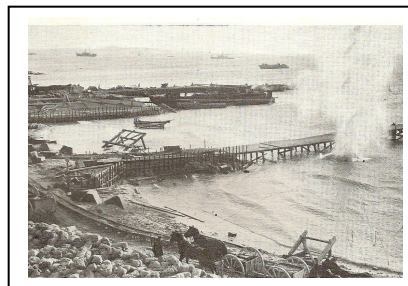
*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* was undertaken. The operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion providing part of the rear-guard on this second occasion also.



(continued)



(Preceding page: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)

*\*Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*



(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers off the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)

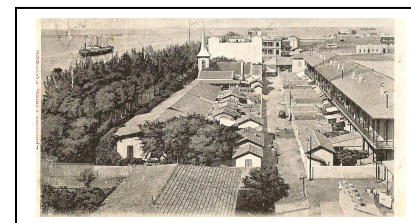
(Right below: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were among the last to leave on two occasions, at Suvla Bay and at Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)

When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division had yet to be decided\*.



*\*Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.*

After a two-month interim, on March 14, the Newfoundlanders had embarked through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for the French port of Marseilles, where the Battalion had landed on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.



(Right above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage postcard)



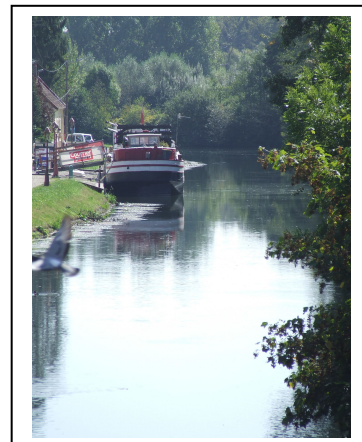
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they were to reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(continued)

(Right below: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had passed on their way from the station. But in three months' time *the Somme* would be a part of their history.

On April 13, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had entered into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where it had been billeted, had received reinforcements and, after two days' time, had been introduced into the British lines of the *Western Front*, there to be immediately put to work to improve the condition of the nearby communication trenches.



(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

Only days later again, two of the four Companies – ‘A’ and ‘B’ – had taken over some support positions from a British unit\* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to move up into forward positions on April 22.



*\*It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles. This was also true on the day of the attack on July 1.*

For the remainder of the spring of 1916, the Newfoundlanders were to be preparing for the British campaign of that upcoming summer, the battles to be fought on the ground named for the innocuous, meandering river flowing through the region, and over which the parent unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched only weeks previously at Pont-Rémy: *the Somme*.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of *Beaumont-Hamel* on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later\*.

*\*Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was sustained while advancing from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*





(Previous page: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village* (see below). – photographs from 2010 & 2015)

*In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man’s-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.*

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It would prove to be the biggest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps worse, it was to continue for the next four and a half months.

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph.* – photograph from 2009)



Such had then been the dire condition of the attacking forces after the slaughter of July 1 that it was feared a German counter-assault might well annihilate what had survived of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme*. The remnants had thus remained in the trenches, at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be ordered back to Englebelmer and a further two before the unit had marched to Mailly-Maillet.

(Right: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French ‘Monument aux Morts’ in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John’s East.* – photograph from 2009)



There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty*. They had been the first to arrive following the disaster at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was still to number only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of that morning of July 1, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time. The unit had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel\*.

(continued)

*\*At the same time the Canadians, some of whom had been serving in Belgium for as long as eighteen months since February of 1915, were being withdrawn to train before then to serve at 'the Somme'.*

*(Right: The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916. Private Bartlett's 'B' Company - without Private Bartlett, of course - inhabited similar billets. – photograph from 2010)*



*(Right: the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card)*



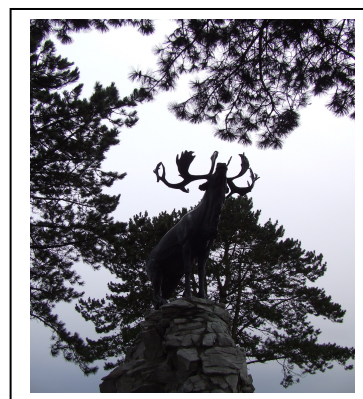
*The Salient – it was to exist for some four years, during almost the entire conflict – had proved to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there; yet they had nonetheless incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal. Then on October 8, after having served there for some ten weeks, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – the Somme.*

*(Right: The fields at Gueudecourt across which the Battalion advanced towards the trees on the right horizon: A Caribou stands there today. - photograph from 2009.)*

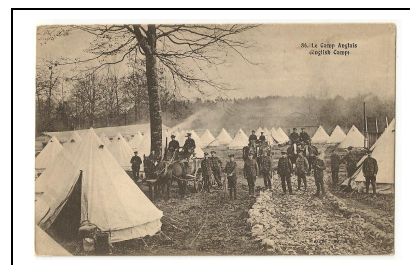


Four days later, on October 12, the Newfoundlanders were to pass to the attack on the outskirts of Gueudecourt – a dozen or so kilometres removed from - and to the south-east of - Beaumont-Hamel. One of the many small farming villages of the area, by that October it had been reduced to little more than an uninhabited heap of rubble. The attack of that day was to be a second ill-planned advance and the Newfoundlanders had once again lost very heavily – two-hundred thirty-nine casualties, all ranks - and achieved very little.

*(Right: The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012)*



After Gueudecourt, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by six weeks spent in *corps reserve* during the Christmas period and of course, by the return of Private Bartlett, accompanied by his re-enforcement draft on November 7.





(Preceding page: *A British encampment somewhere on the Continent in wintry weather – from a vintage post-card*)

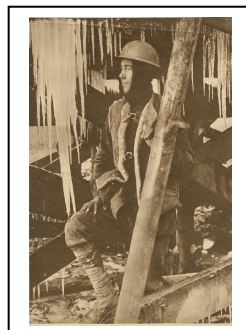
\* \* \* \* \*

The Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality - of the New Year. The only concerted infantry activity to involve the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel of several days' duration at the end of February and beginning of March. The action would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.

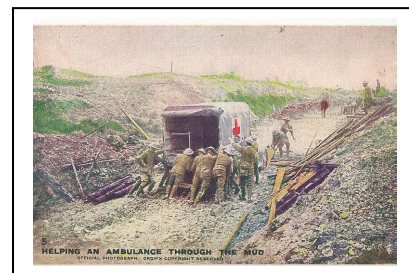


(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village, now reconstructed, which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)

(Right: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers stands in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel apparently enjoying a cigarette, during the late winter of 1916-1917, just prior to the arrival there of the Newfoundlanders who relieved them. – from Illustration*)



Private Bartlett was wounded on March 2 at Sailly-Saillisel, incurring injuries to the scalp, leg, thigh, buttock and left ankle - complicated by a severe compound fracture of the left tibia - and was evacuated to the 55<sup>th</sup> (2/2 London) Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown on that same March 2. He was subsequently admitted into the 1st Australian General Hospital, Rouen, on March 8.



(Right above: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

The son of Joseph Bartlett, fisherman – to whom he had allocated (as of June, 1916) a daily thirty cents from his pay - and of Mary Agnes Bartlett (née *Washer*, deceased on November 17, 1897) of Brigus, Conception Bay\*, he appears to have been his parent's only child\*\*.



*\*The couple married on January 30, 1895.*

*\*\* Joseph Bartlett is recorded as having re-married, to Eliza (Liza) LeDrew, widow.*

Private Bartlett was reported as *dangerously ill* on March 18, and subsequently as having *died of wounds* in the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian General Hospital on the morrow, March 19, 1917. It was the Reverend E. K. H. Caldwell of Brigus of whom it was requested to bear the news to his family.

William Bartlett had enlisted at a *declared* nineteen years of age: date of birth in Brigus, Newfoundland, April 1, 1897 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

*(The photograph of Private Bartlett on the preceding page is from the Provincial Archives.)*

**(Right and far right: A plaque in the old Anglican Church and the Brigus War Memorial both honour the sacrifice of Private Bartlett. – photographs from 2011 and 2009 respectively)**



Private William Washer Bartlett was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



Captain Timewell

7/3/16

Sir

Extension of two week furlow as I am not fit to return back for duty yet. Please send remainder of money due to me I remainder your's turuely

Pte W W Bartlett

No 270 B coy

1<sup>st</sup> Batt Newfoundland

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to [criceadam@yahoo.ca](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 11, 2023.